



**Vale
of White Horse**

District Council

Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the Vale of White Horse District Local Plan 2031 Part One



**SA Report
Non-Technical Summary**

March 2015

Revision schedule					
Rev	Date	Details	Prepared by	Reviewed by	Approved by
1	October 2014	Non-technical summary of the SA Report published alongside the proposed submission version of the Local Plan 2031 Part 1	Anthony Whitaker, Environmental Planner	Nick Chisholm-Batten, Principal Consultant	Steve Smith, Technical Director
2	March 2015	Non-technical summary of the SA Report published alongside the submission version of the Local Plan 2031 Part 1	Anthony Whitaker, Environmental Planner	Alex White Associate Director	Steve Smith, Technical Director

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The SEA Regulations set out that the non-technical summary should provide a summary of the information provided under paragraphs 1 to 9 of Schedule 2 (of the Regulations). The information required and the location within the NTS are set out below.

Summary information required	Location
1. An outline of the contents and main objectives of the plan or programme, and of its relationship with other relevant plans and programmes.	Page 1
2. The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan or programme.	Page 6
3. The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected.	Page 6
4. Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the conservation of wild birds(a) and the Habitats Directive.	Page 6
5. The environmental protection objectives, established at international, Community or Member State level, which are relevant to the plan or programme and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation.	Page 6
6. The likely significant effects on the environment, including short, medium and long-term effects, permanent and temporary effects, positive and negative effects, and secondary, cumulative and synergistic effects, on issues such as— (a) biodiversity; (b) population; (c) human health; (d) fauna; (e) flora; (f) soil; (g) water; (h) air; (i) climatic factors; (j) material assets; (k) cultural heritage, including architectural and archaeological heritage; (l) landscape; and (m) the inter-relationship between the issues referred to in subparagraphs (a) to (l).	Pages 9 - 18
7. The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme.	Page 18

Summary information required	Location
8. An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with, and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information.	Page 9 - 15
9. A description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring in accordance with regulation 17.	Page 19-21

INTRODUCTION

URS have been commissioned to undertake a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) in support of the emerging Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1: Strategic Sites and Policies (the 'Local Plan Part 1'). SA is a mechanism for considering and communicating the likely effects of a draft plan, and alternatives, in terms of sustainability issues, with a view to avoiding and mitigating adverse effects and maximising the positives. SA of the Local Plan is a legal requirement.¹

The Local Plan Part 1 will, once adopted, set the framework for future development in the Vale of White Horse for the period 2014-2031. The vision² for the future is a sustainable Vale:

- With prosperous inclusive and thriving communities that have good access to a range of housing, jobs and services;
- Where everyone can feel safe and enjoy life; and
- Where needs can be met without compromising the natural and built heritage or the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

Once adopted, the Local Plan 2031 Part 1 will be a statutory document used to determine planning applications in the area.

This is the **non-technical summary** of the SA Report being published alongside the proposed submission version of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1.

Structure of the SA Report / this non-technical summary

The SA Report (and this non-technical summary) sets out to answer four questions:

1. What's the scope of the SA?
2. What has plan-making / SA involved up to this point?
3. What are the appraisal findings and recommendations at this current stage?
4. What are the next steps?

In answering these four questions, the SA Report and non-technical summary meet the requirements of the Regulations³. **Appendix 1** of this non-technical summary details the requirements of the regulations and the specific section where they are met in the SA Report.

WHAT'S THE SCOPE OF THE SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL?

An important first step in the process involves establishing the 'scope', i.e. those sustainability issues which should be a focus of the SA, and those that should not. In order to establish the scope there is a need to answer a series of questions including:

- What's the sustainability 'context'?
 - Answering this question primarily involves reviewing Government's National Planning Policy Framework (the 'Framework'); however, it is also important to 'cast the net wider' and consider contextual messages established through other plans, policies, strategies and initiatives.
- What's the sustainability 'baseline'?
 - Answering this question involves reviewing all available data to establish an understanding of the current state of the environment and 'socio-economy' associated with the area.

¹The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 require that an SA Report is published for consultation alongside the 'Proposed Submission' Plan document.

² A more detailed vision is set out in the November 2014 Local Plan Part 1 consultation document available here: <http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/new-local-plan-2031>

³ The Regulations are The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (2004)

Summary context

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and complementary guidance, the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) set the main planning context for the development of the Local Plan Part 1. The context review has supplemented this through consideration of further documents including the 'Housing Standards Review', the 'Oxfordshire Local Investment Plan' and the 'Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment'. A full list of the plans reviewed can be found in the Scoping Report submitted alongside this NTS and the SA Report. Key messages from the context review include that the Local Plan Part 1 should:

- support vibrant and healthy communities;
- take account of and support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all;
- meet the full, objectively assessed need for market and affordable housing;
- create 'sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities';
- support new and emerging business sectors, including positively planning for 'clusters or networks of knowledge driven, creative or high technology industries'.
- contribute to wider sustainability and health objectives;
- minimise impacts on biodiversity with net gains in biodiversity to be provided wherever possible; and
- support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate.

Summary baseline

The baseline review highlights that the Vale of White Horse can be broadly characterised as having:

1. a growing population, of which a high proportion is ageing;
2. a high average house price to income ratio;
3. a high level of protected areas, including European Sites and an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty; and
4. increased road traffic from commuting is having impacts on air quality, including in the Air Quality Management Areas declared for Botley and Abingdon.

Drawing on the findings of the context / baseline review; a list of 'sustainability objectives' and appraisal questions were identified linking back to the evidence base. The objectives, issues and appraisal questions are called the 'SA Framework' and were generated in order to assess the draft plan and appraise different planning 'options' (or 'reasonable alternatives' as the Regulations term them). This framework essentially captures the key context and baseline issues including environmental characteristics of the Vale and the policy context (e.g. Objective 9 addresses the identified issue of air quality (baseline) and Objective 1 addresses housing need (context review)).

These provide a methodological framework for the appraisal, ensuring that it remains focused. The SA Framework is outlined below.

The Sustainability Appraisal Framework

Sustainability objective	Sustainability issues	Appraisal Questions – does the alternative...
1. Provide sufficient suitable homes including affordable homes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shortage of housing, including affordable, market and supported living • Need to preserve and enhance the quality of built environments • Pressure for development, particularly housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ enough homes ○ of appropriate types ○ in appropriate locations ○ at the appropriate times • Provide enough affordable homes

Sustainability objective	Sustainability issues	Appraisal Questions – does the alternative...
2. Ensure the availability of high quality services and facilities in the Vale’s towns and rural areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural isolation and limited access to services • Deprivation in some parts of the Vale • Protection and provision of recreational facilities including natural greenspace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ appropriate facilities and services; ○ in appropriate locations; ○ at the appropriate times • These should be well designed and inclusive and should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ health; ○ education; ○ recreation and sport; ○ community, cultural and leisure; and ○ other essential services.
3. Reduce the need to travel and improve provisions for walking, cycling and public transport and reduce road congestion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Congestion on strategic and local road network • Lack of alternatives to the private car • Rural isolation and limited access to services • Need to mitigate/reduce effects of noise, air and light pollution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the need to travel through more sustainable patterns of land use and development • Encourage modal shift to more sustainable forms of travel • Enable key transport infrastructure improvements
4. Improve the health and well-being of Vale residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health of Vale residents • Deprivation in some parts of the Vale 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide and enhance the provision of community access to green infrastructure, in accordance with national standards • Reduce opportunities for crime and anti-social activities, and reduce fear of crime
5. Reduce inequality, poverty and social exclusion in the Vale, and raise educational achievement and skills levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low levels of educational achievement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote regeneration of deprived areas • Improve opportunities and facilities for all types of learning • Encourage an available and skilled workforce which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ meets the needs of existing and future employers; ○ reduces skills inequalities; ○ helps address skills shortages.
6. Support a strong and sustainable economy within the Vale’s towns and rural areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of employment opportunities for residents • Declining proportion of economically active population • Low levels of educational achievement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote economic growth and a diverse and resilient economy • Provide opportunities for all employers to access: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ different types and sizes of accommodation; ○ flexible employment space; ○ high quality communications infrastructure. • Build on the knowledge-based and high tech economy in the Central Oxfordshire and Science Vale UK area, including the Science Vale UK Enterprise Zone • Promote and support a strong network of towns and villages and the rural economy

Sustainability objective	Sustainability issues	Appraisal Questions – does the alternative...
7. Improve and protect the natural environment including biodiversity, water and soil quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protection and improvement of biodiversity, particularly Special Areas of Conservation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect and enhance natural habitats, wildlife, biodiversity and geodiversity Protect the integrity of European sites and other designated nature conservation sites Encourage the creation of new habitats and features for wildlife Prevent isolation/fragmentation and re-connect / de-fragment habitats Enhance water quality and help to meet the requirements of the Water Framework Directive Protect groundwater resources Minimise and reduce the potential for exposure of people to ground pollution
8. Protect the cultural heritage and provide a high quality townscape and landscape.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protection of valued landscapes Need to preserve and enhance the quality of built environments Protection and provision of recreational facilities including natural greenspace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect and enhance archaeology and heritage assets, and areas of sensitive landscape including AONB and Green Belt. Improve access to, and enjoyment, understanding and use of cultural assets where this will not cause harm
9. Reduce air, noise and light pollution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need to mitigate/reduce effects of noise, air and light pollution Need to reduce use of fossil fuels and encourage development of renewables 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimise and reduce the potential for exposure of people to noise, air and light pollution.
10. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the use of resources and improve resource efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need to reduce use of fossil fuels and encourage development of renewables Action to mitigate the causes and adapt to the effects of climate change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce greenhouse gas emissions Re-use existing buildings Promote development on previously developed land and minimise land use Encourage sustainable, low carbon building practices and design Reduce energy use Promote renewable energy generation Reduce water use Provide adequate infrastructure to ensure the sustainable supply of water and disposal of sewerage Maximise opportunities for reuse, recycling and minimising waste
11. Increase resilience to climate change and flooding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction and prevention of flooding Action to mitigate the causes and adapt to the effects of climate change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimise and reduce flood risk to people and property Respond to the likelihood of future warmer summers, wetter winters, and more extreme weather events Minimise development on high quality agricultural land Provide for local needs locally

WHAT HAS PLAN-MAKING / SA INVOLVED UP TO THIS POINT?

It is a legislative requirement that every Sustainability Appraisal process includes an interim appraisal stage. The SA Report published alongside the draft Plan (i.e. the November 2014 SA Report) must then 'tell the story' of how the interim appraisal has informed development of the draft plan.

As such, Part 2 of the SA Report describes how, as an interim step, there was an appraisal⁴ of:

- alternative approaches to broad distribution and housing target;
- a range of alternative aspirations for strategic sites; and
- alternative approaches to addressing a range of area-wide or thematic policy issues.

The interim appraisal work took place between 2007 and 2014 and has been updated to reflect new evidence and changes in policy (such as the introduction National Planning Policy Framework). The different stages where SA fed-in to the preparation of the draft plan are as follows:

- Issues and Options (2007)
- Preferred Options (2009)
- Additional Consultation (2009 but the additional consultation closed on 29/01/2010)
- Local Plan Part 1 Consultation Draft (2013)
- Housing Delivery Update (2014)

Part 2 of the Report describes how the Council has taken account of SA findings in preparing the draft version of the Plan. The following is a summary.

Pre-Submission SA Report November 2014 consultation responses

Following the consultation of the Pre-Submission SA Report a number of responses requested further justification for decisions made with regard to 'reasonable alternatives'.

The SA Report did include "*an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with*" however; this information has been amplified by adding further justification from the Council's existing evidence base and inserted into chapters, 10, 11 and 12 within the SA Report in response to those consultation comments.

Consultees also requested that mitigation recommendations were brought forward into the main body of the report from the appendices, therefore mitigation has been given a more prominent position in the SA Report.

No new evidence has been developed, it has simply been re-presented in the SA Report to provide greater clarity.

⁴Specifically - likely significant effects on the baseline associated with the alternative policy approaches and site options were identified, described and evaluated. The 11 sustainability objectives established through scoping were drawn on as a methodological framework.

Appraisal of alternative approaches to broad distribution and housing target

Alternative approaches were appraised for the broad distribution of housing in the Vale. This took place in two stages. The first stage identified six alternative options (A- F) for the overall pattern of development. These were: within existing towns and villages; only on brownfield or previously developed land; as extensions to the edges of main settlements; as extensions to the edges of villages; in a new settlement; and in settlements along public transport routes.

The Council developed two refined options, then a third, further refined option combining the best aspects of the two preceding refinements:

- Refined Option A Urban Focus (2010) - This option proposes greater growth across the larger villages alongside urban extensions
- Refined Option B Urban concentration (2010) - This option concentrates the vast majority of growth towards the urban areas
- Further refined Option C (2013) Building on our strengths - This option recognises that whilst the urban areas will still take the bulk of the housing growth, the rural areas will also have significant but proportionate housing and economic growth

In many instances, the Council agreed with the appraisal findings and have committed to ensuring that they will be reflected in the final preferred policy approach (as set out within the Pre-submission Plan). There are no instances of the Council's preferred approach clearly conflicting with the SA findings.

In anticipation of the Oxfordshire SHMA and to enable the emerging local plan to respond quickly to new evidence on housing need the Council tested a range of seven housing delivery options A - F (or growth scenarios). This enabled the Council to test and articulate the preferred spatial strategy for different housing numbers and a range of potentially suitable strategic housing development locations. , These reasonable alternatives (A to F below) were appraised, with Option A being the preferred approach. This approach partially reflected SA findings, which are presented in full in **Appendix 15** of the SA Report. Option A was selected as it was a reasonable basis for local plan consultation based on the current evidence base at this stage.

The Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2014) identified a higher housing target for the District due to, amongst other things, changing economic and social trends in the County and previous housing under-delivery. This led to the identification of Option G in the table below.

The selection of the preferred spatial strategy of 'Building on our Strengths' was informed by the sustainability appraisal of a range of potential housing targets including a level of growth in Delivery Option B very similar to that identified as objectively assessed need in for the Vale in the subsequent Oxfordshire SHMA (19,688 homes to 2029 vs SHMA 20,560 homes to 2031). The Housing Delivery Update Supporting Paper (February 2014) notes as follows at paragraph 43:

"In March 2013 we [the Council] published a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Report to accompany the February 2013 LPP1 consultation document. The March 2013 SA Report included consideration of six options for the housing target, based on the evidence available at that time. The highest option assessed in March 2013 was option B: to provide 19,688 homes over the period 2006 to 2029. Our new proposed housing target (20,560 homes over the period 2011 to 2031) is higher than the highest option considered in March 2013, but is within tolerable testing limits. The new SA Addendum Report which has been prepared to accompany the February 2014 Local Plan consultation, did not therefore reconsider the housing target for the Local Plan."

For completeness the SA did however appraise

- Delivery Option G – Plan to provide the number of homes set out in the Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2014) based on the broad spatial approach of 'building on our strengths' along with development at the larger villages (20,560 over the plan period).

The Council's view is that the identified housing delivery options A-G reflected a range of reasonable housing targets, based on the range of existing evidence of housing need and demand available prior to and following the publication of the Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA).

The Council's preferred option is now Option G. This approach partially reflects SA findings in that Option G was appraised to lead to the most beneficial socio-economic effects; but there were potential significant 'environmental' effects that could potentially be overcome with detailed design and development management policies. Option G was selected by the Council as it meets the District's apportionment of the Oxfordshire Housing Market Area's objectively assessed housing need in full, in accordance with National policy.

The table below, taken from **Appendix 15** of the SA Report, shows the alternatives that were appraised.

Housing Delivery Options

Housing Delivery Options								
Option	Local Plan Part 1						Sub-total planned housing for Local Plan Part 1	Total over plan period
	Wantage /Grove	Faringdon	Harwell campus	Didcot	Ab'don/ Botley	Larger Villages		
Option Ai	1,500	350	400	2,150			4,400	13,294
Option Aii	1,950	350	400	2,150			4,850	13,294
Option Aiii	2,250	350	400	2,150			5,150	13,294
Option B	2,650	750	400	2,350	3,790		9,940	19,688
Option C	2,250	350	400	2,150			5,150	14,308
Option D	1,950 + 200 ECH	350 + 100 ECH	400 + 100 ECH	2,150 + 100 ECH	200 ECH		4,850 + 700 ECH	13,294 + 2,300 ECH
Option E	2,250 + 200 ECH	350 + 100 ECH	400 + 100 ECH	2150 + 100 ECH	200 ECH		5,150 + 700ECH	14,308 + 2,300 ECH
Option F	2,650	750	400	2,350	0		6,150	15,898
Option G	4,750	950	1,400	3,350	1,000	2,510	13,960	20,560

N.B. ECH stands for 'Extra Care Housing'.

Appraisal of alternative aspirations for strategic sites

Upon deciding on a preferred broad distribution and housing target it was necessary to also identify the specific sites that should be allocated in the plan that both follow the broad distribution and add up to the housing target.

The sites appraised came forward from a number of sources and at different times in the plan-making process, such as the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment and submitted via landowners and agents through draft plan consultations, but ultimately a total of 54 sites were appraised in order to 'fit' with the broad distribution and deliver the required number of homes over the plan period (at least 20,560).

A site appraisal process took into account a number of different criteria and information sources for all 54 sites. Appraisal findings are document in **Appendices 7 to 13** of the SA Report which provide more detail and identify mitigation measures to remedy potential negative effects.

A number of preferred sites were chosen to meet the housing target. The preferred site package has been identified by the council based on the findings of the site assessment SA and other evidence, and fits the

preferred spatial strategy of 'building on our strengths'. It is considered the only 'reasonable alternative' at this stage, to meet the objectively assessed housing need identified through the emerging Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment and National Planning Policy Framework requirements for a 'five year housing land supply'. The preferred approach partly reflects SA findings.

The preferred spatial strategy is for the following 22 sites to be allocated in the Local Plan Part 1.

- North West Abingdon on Thames (800 homes)
- North Abingdon on Thames (200 homes)
- Radley Parish, land south of Kennington (270 homes)
- North West Radley (240 homes)
- East of Kingston Bagpuize and Southmoor (280 homes)
- South of East Hanney (200 homes)
- East Sutton Courtenay (220 homes)
- Milton Heights (400 homes)
- Valley Park (at least 2,550 homes)
- North West of Valley Park (800 homes)
- West of Harwell (200 homes)
- East Harwell Campus (850 homes)
- North of Harwell Campus (550 homes)
- Crab Hill, Wantage/Grove (1,500 homes)
- Monks Farm, north Grove (750 homes)
- Grove Airfield (saved Local Plan 2011 site) (2,500 homes)
- Land south of Park Road, Faringdon (350 homes)
- West Stanford in the Vale (200 homes)
- Great Coxwell Parish, South Faringdon (200 homes)
- South West of Faringdon (200 homes)
- North Shrivenham (500 homes)
- East of Coxwell Road, Faringdon (200 homes)

The Harwell Campus Site Options (East Harwell Campus and North of Harwell Campus) were identified as a result of further work after concerns from Natural England and the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Unit about the ability to prevent significant negative landscape impacts on the North Wessex Downs.

The Council commissioned a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment of the area surrounding Harwell Campus and identified four options for housing growth:

- Option A – Site parcels A, B, G (low growth)
- Option B – Site parcels A, B, G and H (medium growth)
- Option C – Site parcels A, B, C, D, G (medium growth)
- Option D – All site parcels A to H (high growth)

The preferred approach is for a hybrid of options B and C whereby parcels A, B, G and H are delivered for housing, and parcel D is allocated for informal open space. This reflects SA findings and the findings in the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment. This hybrid approach has the potential to lead to additional

benefits in terms of housing delivery, the economy of the local area and the Science Vale UK Enterprise Zone and increasing opportunities for delivering appropriate infrastructure in the area to support new housing allocations in the area; without leading to significant adverse effects on the AONB. Appraisal findings are found in **Appendix 14** of the SA Report.

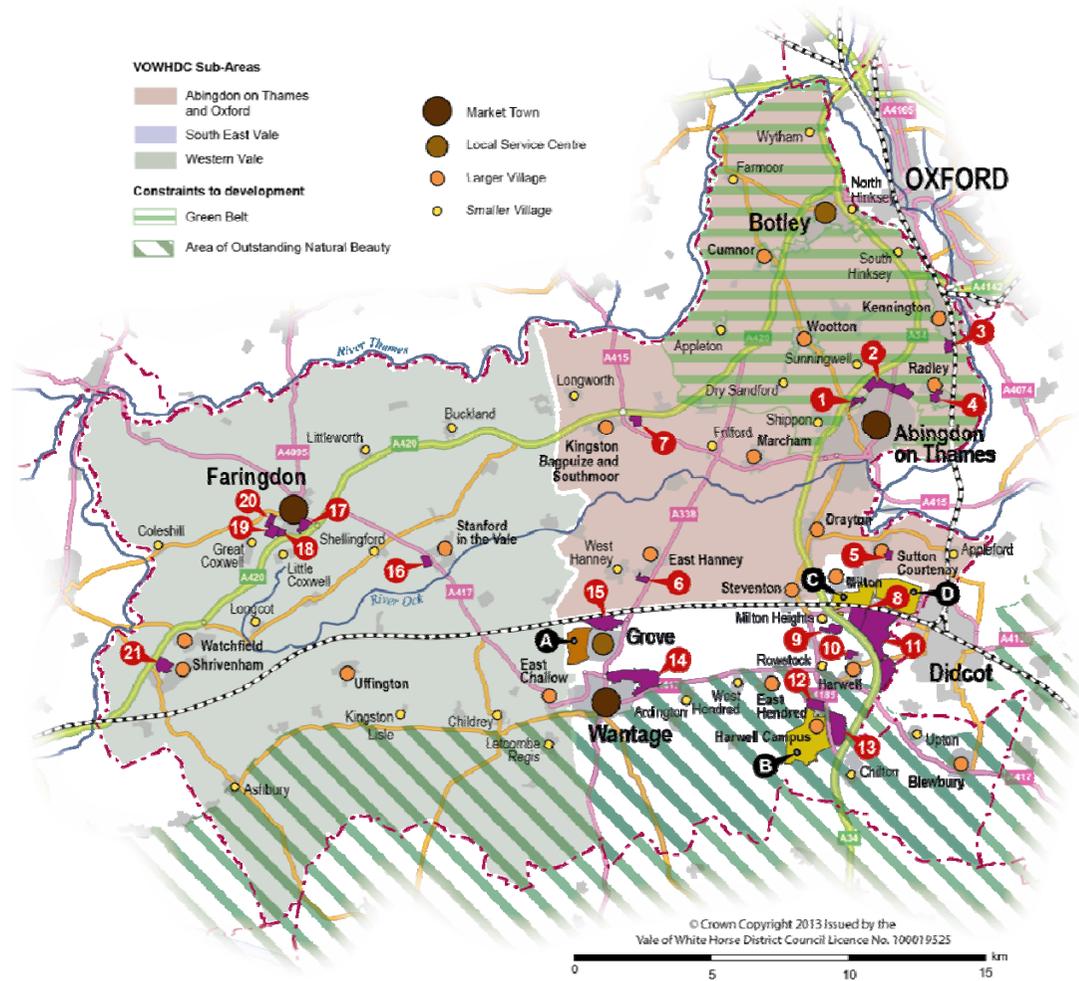
Appraisal of alternative approaches to addressing area-wide policy issues

Alternative approaches were appraised for the following fifteen area-wide policy issues: Science Vale Ring Fence; Housing Density; Housing Need; Affordable Housing; Meeting the needs of Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople; Development to Support the Visitor Economy; Retailing and other main town centre uses; Botley Central Area; Sustainable construction; The Historic Environment; Employment Land Supply; Additional Employment Land Provision; Rural Employment; Protection of existing employment sites; Didcot A; and Employment Land Supply – Location.

In many instances, the Council agreed with the appraisal findings and have committed to ensuring that they will be reflected in the final preferred policy approach (as set out within the Pre-submission Plan). Where the Council has chosen a preferred approach that conflicts with appraisal findings (i.e. the Historic Environment, New Employment Land Provision and Change of Use on Existing Employment Sites policies above) detailed justification has been provided and recommendations incorporated into the final draft of the plan.

The result of interim appraisal findings documented in Part 2 of the SA Report and this non-technical summary has been to inform decision-making in producing the draft plan. The preferred site allocations are shown overleaf.

The Local Plan Part 1 Proposals Map



Strategic Site Allocations	No. of Dwellings
1 North West Abingdon on Thames	200
2 North Abingdon on Thames	800
3 South Kennington	270
4 North West Radley	240
5 East Sutton Courtenay	220
6 South of East Hanney	200
7 Kingston Bagpuize East	280
8 North West Valley Park	800
9 Milton Heights	400
10 West of Harwell	200
11 Valley Park	2550
12 North of Harwell Campus	850
13 East of Harwell Campus	850
14 Crab Hill Wantage	1500
15 Monks Farm, Grove	750
16 Stanford in the Vale	200
17 Land South of Park Road, Faringdon	950
18 East of Coxwell Road, Faringdon	200
19 South Faringdon, (Parish of Great Coxwell) ...	200
20 South West Faringdon	200
21 North Shrivenham	900

Local Plan 2011 saved Allocations	No. of Dwellings
A. Grove Airfield	2500

Planned Economic Growth Areas

- B. Harwell Campus
- C. Milton Park
- D. Didcot Power Station

WHAT ARE THE APPRAISAL FINDINGS AT THIS CURRENT STAGE?

An appraisal of the draft plan is presented under 11 headings; one for each of the sustainability objectives established through Scoping and outlined in the SA Framework. Set out below is a summary of appraisal findings and recommendations.

SA Objective	Commentary
1. Provide sufficient suitable homes including affordable homes.	<p>In terms of Major Positive Effects (i.e. significant effects) on this objective, the Local Plan Part 1 as appraised achieves a number of these. Specifically, the plan would have likely significant positive effects on housing delivery, affordable housing, rural housing, gypsy and traveller accommodation and design. These effects are likely to occur over the medium to long-term, essentially due to the state of the market and would make up for the historic undersupply of housing.</p> <p>The Plan as appraised would not have any significant negative effects on this objective.</p> <p>The policy approach should lead to positive effects in terms of housing delivery by frontloading housing delivery to the beginning of the plan period, and setting out a strong design policy.</p>
2. Ensure the availability of high quality services and facilities in the Vale's towns and rural areas	<p>In terms of Major Positive Effects (i.e. significant effects) on this objective, the Local Plan Part 1 as appraised achieves a number of these. Specifically, the plan would have likely significant positive effects on this objective through providing infrastructure, and community facilities. Furthermore the provision of increased and further higher education facilities should have likely significant positive effects on this objective. These effects are likely to occur over the medium to long-term, essentially due to their dependence on delivery of housing which is dependent on not only to the market status but also through making up the historic undersupply of housing supply.</p> <p>The geographic spread of development should assist in terms of service provision in urban and rural areas within the District, ensuring that the benefits of development are shared. With an increased population, a greater number of facilities and services should be able to be sustained.</p> <p>The Plan as appraised would not have any significant negative effects on this objective.</p>
3. Reduce the need to travel and Improve provisions for walking, cycling and public transport and reduce road congestion.	<p>In terms of Major Positive Effects (i.e. significant effects) on this objective, the Local Plan Part 1 as appraised achieves a number of these. Specifically, the plan would have likely significant positive effects on this objective through delivering housing through the settlement hierarchy and in sustainable locations. Developments will also deliver transport infrastructure including footpaths, cycleways and other upgrades. These effects are likely to occur over the medium to long-term, essentially due to their dependence on delivery of housing which is dependent on not only to the market status but also through making up the historic undersupply of housing supply.</p> <p>The Plan as appraised would have a number of likely significant negative effects on this objective specifically; unallocated sites may be in unsustainable locations; the sliding scale of facilities supports larger facilities in larger settlements (such as employment land and tourism), therefore there may be inducement of traffic via cars to these facilities. These effects are likely to be long-term due to the market status but also to the prioritisation of other strategic sites.</p> <p>A further negative (though not significant) change is that the Didcot A policy does not retain reference to its strategic position as a railhead on the Great Western Main Line, which should be retained if possible in order to use sustainable transport for freight.</p>
4. Improve the health and well-being of Vale residents.	<p>In terms of Major Positive Effects (i.e. significant effects) on this objective, the Local Plan Part 1 as appraised achieves a number of these. Specifically, the plan would have likely significant positive effects on this objective through creating improved living conditions, greater housing choice, increased access to employment and correlating improvements to health; and a net gain in green infrastructure. These effects are likely to occur over the medium to long-term, essentially due to the delivery of housing which is dependent on not only to the market status but also through making up the historic undersupply of housing supply. The policies in LPP1 are considered to lead to positive effects in terms of health and wellbeing through delivering appropriate levels of infrastructure to address deficiencies in the Vale. This should result likely significant positive effects.</p> <p>The Plan as appraised would not have any significant negative effects on this objective.</p>

SA Objective	Commentary
5. Reduce inequality, poverty and social exclusion in the Vale, and raise educational achievement and skills levels.	<p>In terms of Major Positive Effects (i.e. significant effects) on this objective, the Local Plan Part 1 as appraised achieves a number of these. Specifically, the plan would have likely significant positive effects through providing a significant quantum of housing in mixed communities. The plan would also provide employment land and should lead to job creation in the Vale. The provision of affordable housing should result in reductions in housing deprivation. The plan in allowing additional job creation across the vale should address the deprivation at the edge of settlements. The plan will also address education and social exclusion through access to services and facilities. These effects are likely to occur over the medium to long-term.</p> <p>The plan would strengthen regeneration efforts through allocating development at a number of settlements. Additionally, through seeking to meet housing need in full, the delivery of and contribution towards education facilities should help to increase access to education across the Vale. The major and strategic sites coming forward through the plan will be required to contribute towards infrastructure provision which should improve access to education, as well as other social and community facilities.</p> <p>The Plan as appraised would not have any significant negative effects on this objective.</p>
6. Support a strong and sustainable economy within the Vale's towns and rural areas.	<p>In terms of Major Positive Effects (i.e. significant effects) on this objective, the Local Plan Part 1 as appraised achieves a number of these. Specifically, the plan would have likely significant positive effects through; sufficient good quality houses encouraging more skilled workers to the Vale; provision of additional jobs in Wantage, Grove and Faringdon; delivering and enabling infrastructure; retaining flexibility and capturing overnight spend. These effects are likely to occur over the medium to long-term, essentially due to their dependence on delivery of housing which is dependent on not only to the market status but also through making up the historic undersupply of housing supply.</p> <p>The LPP1 policies support the economy through delivering an increased number of houses. This should increase local spending power (through an increased local population) and also support affordability, with benefits in terms of increased disposable income. The strategic sites allow growth at a number of the larger settlements in the District, which should spread the benefits of growth across a wider area than was previously the case</p> <p>The Plan as appraised would not have any significant negative effects on this objective.</p>
7. Improve and protect the natural environment including biodiversity, water and soil quality	<p>In terms of Major Positive Effects (i.e. significant effects) on this objective, the Local Plan Part 1 as appraised achieves a number of these. Specifically, the plan would have likely significant positive effects through: the provision of text identifying amenity greenspace in the definition of 'necessary infrastructure'; specifying that there should be 'net gains' in biodiversity and green infrastructure not only with regard to individual sites but also through connecting and restoring habitats. These effects are likely to occur over the medium to long-term, essentially due to their dependence on delivery of housing which is dependent on not only to the market status but also through making up the historic undersupply of housing supply.</p> <p>The LPP1 policies are considered to result in benefits in terms of biodiversity through providing opportunities to create new habitat and strategic green infrastructure linkages to re-connect habitats. The strategic sites have detailed site templates which require mitigation to lead to no negative effects and contribute to a net gain in biodiversity.</p> <p>The Plan as appraised would not have any significant negative effects on this objective.</p>
8. Protect the cultural heritage and provide a high quality townscape and landscape.	<p>In terms of Major Positive Effects (i.e. significant effects) on this objective, the Local Plan Part 1 as appraised achieves a number of these. Specifically, the plan would have likely significant positive effects through ensuring a higher quality townscape and more sympathetic development; an improved townscape in the Botley area; provision of green infrastructure and achieving a net gain in biodiversity. These effects are likely to occur over the medium to long-term, as they are (in part) dependent on the improvement of Botley town centre and development at Harwell Oxford Campus which are strategic schemes that will likely to take longer to deliver.</p>
9. Reduce air, noise and light pollution	<p>The policies in LPP1 have the potential to increase air pollution within the District's AQMAs; however mitigation measures should prevent this from being a major effect. Additionally, the decision to allocate development at East Harwell Oxford Campus (in the AONB) would likely result in negative effects in terms of light and noise pollution in a tranquil area, even after the extensive mitigation measures proposed in the site template and LVIA mitigation strategy are implemented.</p> <p>The Local Plan Part 1 is unlikely to have significant effects, either positive or negative, for this objective.</p>

SA Objective	Commentary
10. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the use of resources and improve resource efficiency	<p>In terms of Major Positive Effects (i.e. significant effects) on this objective, the Local Plan Part 1 as appraised achieves a number of these. Specifically, the plan would have likely significant positive effects through building at a higher density; using brownfield land where possible and the promotion of renewable energy. These effects are likely to occur over the medium to long-term, essentially due to their dependence on delivery of housing which is dependent on not only to the market status but also through making up the historic undersupply of housing supply. The policies in LPP1 are considered to lead to an increase in the total emissions and resource use of the Vale through an increased population; however per capita use is likely to decrease with the policy approach of LPP1. The design policies should help reduce emissions from transport by encouraging sustainable transport and promoting buildings that minimise energy consumption. Some of the additional sites have the potential to lead to negative effects in terms of sterilising mineral resources.</p> <p>The Plan has been appraised to not have any significant negative effects.</p>
11. Increase resilience to climate change and flooding	<p>In terms of Major Positive Effects (i.e. significant effects) on this objective, the Local Plan Part 1 as appraised achieves a number of these. Specifically, the plan would have likely significant positive effects through: the adoption of sustainable design techniques and the implementation of green infrastructure. These effects may be felt from the short-term through to the longer term. However, the greater the level of development the greater the effects will be. A number of sites are allocated on the Best and Most Versatile land in the District. The decision to allocate sites on such land will require careful justification.</p>

Cumulative effects

Cumulative effects are the effects of elements of the plan when combined with other planned activities inside and outside of the plan area. Taking into account all of the policies in the draft plan, and committed development inside and outside of the District, two key cumulative effects were also identified; although neither were appraised to lead to significant adverse effects. These minor negative cumulative effects are due to traffic growth on the A34; and potential cumulative effects on the North Wessex Downs AONB.

Overall conclusions

It is not the role of SA to proscribe preferred options, but it is the role of SA to identify likely significant effects on particular aspects of the baseline associated with particular options or policies. At this current stage in the plan-making process it has been possible to identify instances of options and policies potentially leading to significant effects (positive and negative) on one or more element of the baseline.

In each instance, these findings should be considered by the Council, but the effects identified need not automatically mean that the policy in question should / should not be preferred. The reality is that the decision the Council makes is based on the knowledge of the implications and trade-offs of that decision and the wider evidence base. The SA by its nature is a process that identifies effects across a broad range of criteria, from biodiversity to human health. The outcome of this approach is often competing priorities or trade-offs e.g. providing positive effects of housing, economic land and other 'socio-economic' benefits versus negative effects on biodiversity or landscape of providing development. It is the case that the Council must determine whether a 'trade-off' is acceptable. It may also be the case that there is the potential to 'mitigate' negative effects, i.e. implement the option (through appropriate policies) in a way that is different to that currently envisaged (or assumed). The table overleaf shows key considerations at this stage.

In the case of the Local Plan Part 1, the SA process has identified a range of likely significant positive effects e.g. though housing delivery; provision of infrastructure; improved living conditions and job creation. These positive effects need to be balanced against the likely significant negative effects identified. In the case of the Local Plan Part 1, these are related to potential increases in traffic induced through unallocated sites and the support of larger settlements in terms of facilities provision. Note there are other negative effects identified but they have not been identified as significant at this stage.

In terms of sites, there is a similar balancing act to be performed by the Council. The site package choices have been informed by the SA process, which has influenced the preferred options and draft plan. In this case, likely significant positive effects have been identified for North West Abingdon on Thames; Milton Heights; Valley Park; North West of Valley Park; West of Harwell; East Harwell Campus; North of Harwell Campus; Crab Hill, Wantage/Grove; Monks Farm, north Grove; Land south of Park Road, Faringdon; West

Stanford in the Vale; Great Coxwell Parish, South Faringdon; South West of Faringdon; North Shrivenham; East of Coxwell Road, Faringdon. Likely significant negative effects have been identified for: East of Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor; South of East Hanney; East Harwell Campus; North of Harwell Campus; Monks Farm, north Grove; Land south of Park Road, Faringdon; South West of Faringdon; and North Shrivenham

Identified significant negative effects and mitigation measures

Policy	SA Objective	Effect identified	Recommendations and mitigation
Policy 24 – New employment development on unallocated sites	3 - Reduce the need to travel and improve provisions for walking, cycling and public transport and reduce road congestion.	Unallocated sites are not necessarily in the most sustainable or accessible locations. Likely to lead to increased travel by road and therefore a significant negative effect .	<p>Refuse applications that would lead to significant transport impacts and are not accessible by public transport.</p> <p>Ensure that as many new employment sites as possible that come forward are located alongside public transport routes as possible.</p> <p>Ensure that new employment sites contribute towards sustainable transport improvements.</p>
Policy 27 – Tourism-related development	3 - Reduce the need to travel and improve provisions for walking, cycling and public transport and reduce road congestion.	The policy supports development of larger facilities in the larger settlements, although given the rural nature of the Vale it is likely that visitors will be travelling both within and outside of the Vale to visit attractions. It is considered that criteria iii) and iv) would likely increase the amount of travel by car to access these facilities, leading to significant negative effects , however they are in the best location for business users and tourists respectively.	Refuse applications that would lead to significant transport impacts and are not accessible by public transport.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS (INCLUDING MONITORING)?

Following consultation the Council may choose (depending on whether any significant issues remain outstanding) to make modifications to the Draft Plan in light of consultation responses, the findings and recommendations set out within this SA Report or any other new sources of evidence that emerge. The Local Plan Part 1 would then either be re-consulted on (another Draft Plan) or the Proposed Submission Plan would be published for consultation prior to being submitted to Government for ‘Examination in Public’.

The draft Local Plan Part 1 and accompanying SA Report has been ‘published’ in line with Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) Regulations 2012 so that final representations can be made. Following Publication, it is the intention that the Plan will be ‘Submitted’ for Examination in Public (EiP). The Council will also submit a summary of issues raised (if any) through consultation responses at the Publication stage so that these can be considered by the Government appointed Planning Inspector who will oversee the EiP.

At Examination the Inspector will consider representations (alongside the SA Report) before then either reporting back on the Plan’s soundness or identifying the need for modifications. If the Inspector identifies that modifications to the Plan are necessary, these will developed with SA input and also through consultation. Once found to be ‘sound’ the Plan will be formally adopted by the Council.

At the time of Adoption a ‘Statement’ must be published that sets out (amongst other things):

- How this SA Report and responses received as part of the current consultation have been taken into account when finalising the plan; and
- Measures decided concerning monitoring.

At the current stage (i.e. within the SA Report), there is a need to present ‘*measures envisaged concerning monitoring*’ only. As such, set out below are measures that might be taken to monitor development of those areas where the SA has found there to be significant effects.

Measures envisaged concerning monitoring.

Objective	Monitoring Measure	Potential source of data
1. Provide sufficient suitable homes including affordable homes to meet assessed need.	Housing delivery	VoWH
	Housing delivery in rural areas	VoWH
	Density of permissions and developments by Location	VoWH
	Number of successful appeals for major development	VoWH
	Permissions and developments for affordable housing by location	VoWH
	Provision of affordable housing through rural exception	VoWH
	Contributions taken towards the provision of affordable housing	VoWH
2. Ensure the availability of high quality services and facilities in the Vale’s towns and rural areas.	Access to services and facilities of current and future residents	VoWH
	Educational attainment	Census
	Contributions taken to mitigate the impact of development (incl. s106, s278 and revenues from CIL – if applicable)	VoWH
3. Reduce the need to travel and Improve provisions for walking, cycling and public transport and reduce road congestion.	Travel to work patterns	Census
	Average journey times by mode	Census
	Average km travelled by mode	Census
	Modal split	Census
	Cycle ways improved /enhanced	VoWH
	Department for Transport (DfT) Core Accessibility Indicators and other accessibility indicators	DfT
4. Improve the health and well-being of Vale residents.	Health Profile for the Vale	JSNA/HWB
	Delivery of green infrastructure including extent and condition / quality.	VoWH
	Index of multiple deprivation.	DCLG
5. Reduce inequality, poverty and social exclusion in the Vale, and raise educational achievement and	Index of Multiple Deprivation (and sub-domains)	DCLG
	Work force classification	Census
	Permissions and developments for gypsies, travellers and travelling show people by	VoWH

Objective	Monitoring Measure	Potential source of data
skills levels.	location Demand and supply for specialist accommodation	VoWH
6. Support a strong and sustainable economy within the Vale's towns and rural areas.	Work force classification Job seekers claimants Permissions and developments for employment uses by location	Census Census / DWP? VoWH
7. Improve and protect the natural environment including biodiversity, water and soil quality	% of the Vale's SSSIs in a favourable or unfavourable but recovering condition BAP species and habitat extent and condition Chemical and biological water quality % of applications granted against the advice of Natural England Change in areas of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biodiversity importance • UKBAP priority habitat • non agri-environment biodiversity gains Change in number of UK BAP priority species Distribution and status of farmland birds % of planning applications with green infrastructure provision, or contribution towards green infrastructure, (type and location of green infrastructure within planning applications.) % of planning applications that include biodiversity enhancement schemes	Natural England Environment Agency VoWH Natural England VoWH / Defra / NE Defra / NE VoWH / Defra / NE VoWH
8. Protect, enhance and manage the cultural heritage and provide a high quality townscape and landscape.	Number and % of Listed Buildings at Risk (all grades) Number and % of Scheduled Monuments at Risk Number of conservation areas and % of local authority area covered by designation Number and % of Conservation Areas at Risk % of applications granted against the advice of the Statutory Bodies (Natural England, English Heritage, AONB Unit) Number and % of Registered Parks and Gardens at Risk % of planning applications where archaeological investigations were required	English Heritage English Heritage VoWH VoWH VoWH English Heritage VoWH English Heritage

Objective	Monitoring Measure	Potential source of data
	prior to approval	
	% of planning applications where archaeological mitigation strategies (were developed and implemented)	VoWH
	Number of major development projects that include 'enhancement measures for heritage assets of historic landscape character	VoWH
	Conservation area appraisals and management plans	VoWH
	Permissions and developments within designated AONB areas	VoWH
	Number of developments which have a significant effect on landscape character and designated landscape	VoWH
	Effect of development on National Character Areas	VoWH
	Number of major developments which have a significant effect on heritage assets or historic landscape character	Natural England
	Permissions and developments within Green Belt boundary	VoWH
		VoWH
9. Reduce air, noise and light pollution	Air Quality (PM ₁₀ , PM _{2.5} and NO _x)	VoWH
	Quantity of noise complaints due to construction and operation of new developments	VoWH
10. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the use of resources and improve resource efficiency	GHG emissions per capita	Defra
	Water efficiency of new developments	VoWH
	Energy efficiency of new developments	VoWH
	Production of electricity (MWh e) and heat (MWh th) from renewable sources	VoWH
11. Increase resilience to climate change and flooding	Number of developments given permission contrary to EA objections (over flood risk).	VoWH
	Permissions and developments on flood zones	VoWH
	% of new developments incorporating climate change adaptation measure for example: SUDS	VoWH

APPENDIX 1: REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS⁵ AND WHERE THEY ARE MET WITHIN THE SA REPORT

SEA Regulations Schedule 2 requirements	Where requirements are met in the SA Report
1. An outline of the contents and main objectives of the plan or programme, and of its relationship with other relevant plans and programmes.	Part 1 of this SA Report. An outline of the contents and main objectives of the plan can be found at Section 4. The relationship of the plan with other relevant plans and programmes can be found in Section 5.
2. The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan or programme.	The baseline is set out in Section 6 and the likely evolution of the baseline is set out in Section 7.
3. The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected.	Section 6.
4. Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the conservation of wild birds and the Habitats Directive.	Section 6.
5. The environmental protection objectives, established at international, Community or Member State level, which are relevant to the plan or programme and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation.	Section 5 and 6; and taken into account in Part 2 (assessing the reasonable alternatives) and Part 3 (assessing the effects of the draft plan).
6. The likely significant effects on the environment, including short, medium and long-term effects, permanent and temporary effects, positive and negative effects, and secondary, cumulative and synergistic effects, on issues such as biodiversity; population; human health; fauna; flora; soil; water; air; climatic factors; material assets; cultural heritage, including architectural and archaeological heritage; landscape; and inter-relationships between the above issues.	Part 3 of the SA Report. The likely significant effects are set out in Section 30 (on a policy by policy basis) and 31 (against the SA Framework). There is a specific cumulative effects section in Section 32. Section 33 sets out the conclusions of this SA Report.
7. The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme.	Mitigation is set out in the tables listed in Sections 29, 30, 31, 32 and 33.
8. An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with, and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information.	The 'story' of plan-making is set out in Part 2 of this SA Report, Sections 9 to 27. Detailed appraisal matrices are located in Appendices 4 to 32.
9. A description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring in accordance with regulation 17.	Section 36.
10. A non-technical summary of the information provided under paragraphs 1 to 9.	This document is the non-technical summary.

⁵ Taken from Schedule 2 of The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (2004)